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UCC Wellness Ministries Newsletter

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REFLECTION

"Cultivate the habit of being grateful for every good thing that comes to you, and to give thanks continuously. And because all things have contributed to your advancement, you should include all things in your gratitude."

Ralph Waldo Emerson

GRATITUDE

Gratitude is defined as the quality of being thankful; a readiness to show appreciation for and to return kindness. Courtney E. Ackerman's article *What is Gratitude and Why Is It So Important?* defines gratitude as a "positive emotion felt after being the beneficiary of some sort of gift. It is also a social emotion often directed towards a person (the giver of a gift) or felt towards a higher power." The article includes discussion on nine recent psychological findings related to the study of gratitude. Gratitude is about focusing on what's good in our lives and being thankful for the things we have. Gratitude is pausing to notice and appreciate the things that we often take for granted, like having a safe place to live, food, clean water, friends, and family. Robert Emmons

has a five- minute YouTube video on *Cultivating Gratitude*. In addition to gratitude journals, he mentions gratitude jars that can be used to collect examples of gratitude.

A children's ministry activity for this month could be for children to create gratitude jars. After the gratitude jar is made, write down something you're grateful for on a piece of paper and place it in the jar. Doing this daily up to Thanksgiving would give time for collecting examples of what has made you grateful. Then, on Thanksgiving, family members pull out the slips of paper and read them aloud. Creating the gratitude jar can be a family project. Each family member can have a separate jar or use different colored paper for each family member to write their notes for a family jar.

In every season, we can practice gratitude:

1. Each day, think of three things you are grateful for. Notice the good things in your life. Pause and notice the feeling of gratitude when it happens. Let it sink in; enjoy it.
2. Start a gratitude journal.
3. Practice gratitude rituals – on awakening in the morning, before meals, at the end of each day.

We can also be intentional to express gratitude:

1. Show appreciation to someone who did something nice.
2. Extend a kindness to express gratitude.
3. Tell people in your life what they mean to you.

COVID-19 UPDATE:

CDC recommends everyone 12 years and older should get a COVID-19 vaccination to help protect against COVID-19. Widespread vaccination is a critical tool to help stop the pandemic. Children 12 years and older have been able to get the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine.

A U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) advisory committee recommended a smaller dose of Pfizer-BioNTech's vaccine for emergency use authorization for **children ages 5 to 11**. This week the CDC made a final ruling that children ages 5 years and older are able to get an age-appropriate dose of Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine. **You can find a COVID-19 vaccine site:** Search vaccines.gov, text your ZIP code to 438829, or call 1-800-232-0233 to find locations near you.

CDC information on Covid Vaccination Boosters: For individuals who received a Pfizer-

BioNTech or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine, the following groups are eligible for a booster shot at 6 months or more after their initial series:

- 65 years and older
- Age 18+ who live in long-term care settings
- Age 18+ who have underlying medical conditions
- Age 18+ who work or live in high-risk settings

For people who received the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine, booster shots are also recommended for those who are 18 and older and who were vaccinated two or more months ago. The CDC's clinical guidance advises people to get the same booster as their initial vaccine, but allows people to mix and match (i.e. get a different COVID-19 booster than their initial vaccine) if they have a different preference.

Bring your CDC COVID-19 Vaccination Record card with you to your appointment if you need another shot of COVID-19 vaccine so your provider can fill in the information about your additional shot. **If you have lost your CDC COVID-19 Vaccination Record card or don't have a copy,** contact your vaccination provider directly to access your vaccination record. If you cannot contact your vaccination provider site directly, contact your state health department's immunization information system (IIS). Vaccination providers are required to report COVID-19 vaccinations to their IIS and related systems.

You can get a COVID-19 vaccine and other vaccines, including a flu vaccine, at the same visit. Experience with other vaccines has shown that the way our bodies develop protection, known as an immune response, and possible side effects after getting vaccinated are generally the same when given alone or with other vaccines. Learn more about the timing of other vaccines.

The CDC now offers **V-Safe** - A new smartphone-based, after-vaccination health checker for people who receive COVID-19 vaccines. **V-safe** uses text messaging and web surveys from CDC to check in with vaccine recipients following COVID-19 vaccination. **V-safe** also provides second vaccine dose reminders if needed, and telephone follow up to anyone who reports medically significant (important) adverse events. Instructions are available on **V-Safe** registration, completing a **V-Safe** check-in, accessing print resources, and a Frequently Asked Questions section about **V-Safe**.

NOVEMBER HEALTH EDUCATIONAL TOPICS:

Flu Season 2021:

There is still time to get your annual flu vaccination. For this 2021–2022 influenza season, influenza vaccination is important to reduce the impact of respiratory illnesses attributed to influenza which may add burdens on healthcare systems during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The CDC offers information on the frequently asked questions related to influenza. The CDC recommends the annual flu vaccination for everyone six months and older, with few exceptions.

While vaccination is recommended before the end of October, getting vaccinated later can still be beneficial during most seasons for people who have put it off.

Mental Health:

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) offers a COVID-19 Resource and Information Guide. It includes how to manage anxiety during this challenging time, how to access medication and treatment during physical distancing and while in quarantine, resources, supporting children returning to school, and to how to deal with the loss of a loved one to COVID-19.

National Survivors of Suicide Loss Day – Saturday, November 20. National Survivors of Suicide Loss Day was designated by the United States Congress as a day when the friends and family of those who have died by suicide can join together for healing and support. This day is set for the Saturday before American Thanksgiving. Every year, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention sponsors International Survivors of Suicide Day, a program that unites survivors of suicide loss across the world. At events in hundreds of cities spanning six continents, survivors of suicide loss gather together to remember their loved ones and offer each other support. The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention produces a program shown at these events that features personal stories and advice from other survivors and psychiatric professionals. These events help survivors cope with the tragedy of losing someone to suicide.

Nutrition Notes:

In the next two months, people will be gathering to share meals over holidays. The CDC describes general Food Safety Tips that are an important part of holiday meal preparation and offers food safety tips for your holiday turkey. Whether you call it turkey stuffing, dressing or filling, it is always important to prepare it safely. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has information on stuffing and food safety. In addition to safe food preparation, it is important to be aware of food recalls and outbreaks caused by foods. A Salmonella outbreak associated with various brands of whole raw red, white, or yellow onions prompted a recent recall. Check to see if you have any recalled onions described in the alert. If you don't know where your onions are from, discard them.

Diabetes Awareness Month:

November is Diabetes Awareness Month. This year's focus is on prediabetes and preventing diabetes. An estimated 30.3 million people in the United States have diabetes. About one in four people with diabetes (eight million) are undiagnosed and don't know they have the disease. An estimated 84 million people have prediabetes. Of those who are prediabetic, 24.2 million people are aged 65 years or older.

The National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases has tips to help manage prediabetes and prevent diabetes. Their toolkit has a flyer which can be used as part of a bulletin board informational display.

The American Diabetes Association has information on Type I and Type II Diabetes, and Pre-Diabetes. Information is also available on gestational diabetes. You can take the association's sixty-second Type 2 risk test.

National Alzheimer's Disease Awareness Month.

More than 6.2 million Americans are living with Alzheimer's disease. This progressive brain disorder is not a normal part of aging.

The Alzheimer's Foundation of America (AFA) offers twenty-eight fact sheets and information about Alzheimer's disease and practical tips for caregiving. The foundation offers Care Connection, a regular online seminar series that takes place on the second Thursday of every month. All Care Connection webinars are free and open to everyone. You can register for this month's webinar, New Rules For End of Life Care: A Guide on the Stages of Death which will be offered on November 12th at 1 pm ET.

National Hospice and Palliative Care Month:

The National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization has a program called CaringInfo. Its intent is to help people make informed decisions about care and services before a crisis. Its user-friendly format offers information on advance directives, palliative care, caregiving, and hospice care. It includes a Find a Care Provider tool that allows you to find hospice, palliative care, and bereavement service providers that may be near you.

The National Institute on Aging has a site focused on Advance Care Planning: Healthcare Directives which includes an explanation of advance planning, a 3-minute video, and a downloadable pdf infographic.

DECEMBER HEALTH EDUCATIONAL TOPICS:

HIV/AIDS:

December 1st is World AIDS Day. It is a day to honor those who have died and re-commit to ending the AIDS epidemic. The theme for the 2021 observance is **"Ending the HIV Epidemic: Equitable Access, Everyone's Voice"**. Through December this year, you can follow the HIV.gov blog for updates on federal activities honoring this observance. You can also read about Ending the HIV Epidemic in the U.S. This plan was announced in 2019 to end the HIV epidemic in the United States by the year 2030.

Holiday Safety:

Holiday lights, greens and trees, candles and decorations may pose fire risks. Holiday fire safety tips can ensure the holidays are safe. The National Fire Protection Association has Safety Tip Sheets on Christmas Tree Safety and Winter Holiday Safety Tips. NFPA also notes that Thanksgiving is the peak day for home cooking fires, followed by Christmas Day, the day before Thanksgiving, and Christmas Eve. It is a good reminder to stay in the kitchen when cooking on the stovetop.

Safe Toys and Gifts Awareness Month:

December was designated as Safe Toys and Gifts Awareness Month by Prevent Blindness America who estimates that an average of 11,000 toy-related eye injuries in children occur each year. These injuries range from mild corneal abrasions to severe retinal detachment and

blindness. The American Public Health Association also shares guidelines for choosing safe toys noting these are especially important for infants and children under the age of three. Consumer Reports offer important Toy Safety Tips for the holiday season.

De-Stress December:

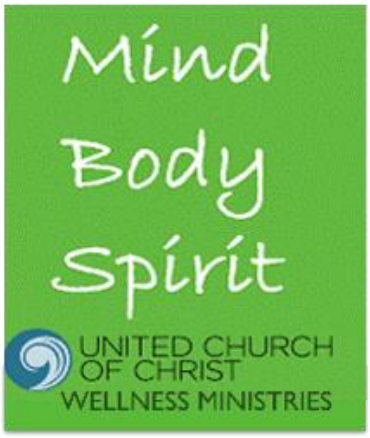
For millions of people around the world, December means going shopping for family, friends, and others. However, shopping can create feelings of anxiety, indecisiveness, and sometimes even guilt. The article Spiritual Practices for Shopping has 20 ways to make shopping a richer and deeper experience and suggests intentions and prayers to integrate into your shopping experience.

As the pre-holiday advertisements begin to arrive by catalog and social media announcements, there is a current supply chain crisis affecting delivery of all kinds of goods. This shortage of material goods may offer an opportunity to reconsider the usual gifting associated with the holiday seasons, and as a result, to buy less. Some alternative approaches might include "buying local" from craft shops and artisans, purchasing vintage or used items, donating to a charity, or handmade gifts.

WELLNESS MINISTRIES UPDATE:

The Wellness Ministries Toolkit is progressing. The complete toolkit will be posted online in a book format that can be easily searched and read. Active links will lead to additional information that enables readers to go deeper into a topic of interest.

A short video, ***UCC Wellness Ministries Toolkit: Overview***, has been posted on the Wellness Ministries section of the UCC website.



KEEP CONNECTED:

Visit our Facebook and LinkedIn pages: Post comments or share information about your health ministries; join in conversations.

An invitation from the Editor, Alyson Breisch:

- Do you have something you want to share with colleagues?
- Do you have an innovative way you've continued to provide wellness ministries during this past year?

Let us hear about it – you could be featured in an upcoming issue of the newsletter.

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